

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A a near-field exposure apparatus including a light source, a stage on which an object to be exposed to light is placed, a deformable membrane portion having on one surface of the membrane portion a shielding membrane that has a micro aperture, and a substrate for supporting a peripheral region of the other surface of the membrane portion. The exposure is conducted in the membrane portion in a sagged condition and the photomask is designed to have a structure so as to relieve stress that is generated at a border between the membrane portion and the substrate when the membrane portion sags. The structure is one of a structure including a reinforcing member placed at the border, such that the substrate is partially thinned near the border, and including an intermediate layer that is formed between the substrate and the other surface of the membrane portion and stretches toward a center of the other surface of the member portion.